

## *Congressman Authored Original Legislation to Create Heritage Area*

Washington, DC -- As the author of the 1996 legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today hailed U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's announcement that she secured a Senate hearing scheduled for next week to consider the reauthorization of the program. The Heritage Area links more than 100 individual sites that promote tourism and recreation in the region while showcasing the Hudson Valley's unique role in American history and development. Hinchey is simultaneously working in the House to secure a reauthorization of the program, which is currently set to expire in September.

"For the past 16 years, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area has showcased the remarkable natural beauty, historic legacy, and cultural richness of our region," Hinchey said. "It is absolutely critical that we maintain this important federal designation that has drawn positive attention to our region, preserved significant sites, and helped increase tourism, which in turn has helped the local economy. Protecting and promoting the Hudson River Valley for this and future generations of New Yorkers and all Americans has been a primary focus of my work in public service for a long time and I am working to ensure this Heritage Area continues to exist and grow for many years to come. I thank Senator Gillibrand for her hard work to maintain and strengthen the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area through legislation in the Senate. I look forward to working with her to champion and ensure final passage of this important program."

Immediately upon arriving in Congress in 1993, Hinchey began to work on federal legislation to create the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. In 1996, the congressman secured passage of that legislation, which was the first federal action formally recognizing the fundamentally significant role the people of the Hudson Valley played in the early development of America and its institutions. The purpose of this federal designation was to "recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation."

Before coming to Congress, Hinchey used his position as a member of the New York State Assembly to author state legislation that created the Hudson River Valley Greenway with the goal of establishing an innovative program that would empower communities throughout the Hudson Valley to develop and implement plans that would improve their economic circumstances and enhance the quality of life for residents. The program, which has been

immensely popular and successful, has utilized a "bottom up" approach to regional planning that combines local participation in planning with state and federal dollars in order to achieve the initiative's goals of protecting the incredible natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources of the Hudson Valley.

The Greenway, which Hinchey established, was already well-organized and effective by the time he secured congressional approval of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. At that point, the Greenway was designated as the local manager of the Heritage Area program. The establishment of the new federal program opened up opportunities for federal funding of Greenway initiatives. Under Hinchey's guidance, Congress has directed millions of dollars to the Heritage Area program, which directly complemented and augmented ongoing state Greenway initiatives.

Congress must act before the end of September in order for the Hudson River Valley Heritage Area to continue. Without the authorization, the Heritage Area would not be able to continue, which would deny federal resources to the Valley that have been used to help preserve and promote historical, cultural, recreational, and natural sites in the region. As a result of Gillibrand's efforts, the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources will hold a hearing on Wednesday, June 27 to discuss the extension of the authorization for the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area for 10 more years.

Hinchey, who grew up along the banks of the Hudson River in both New York City and Saugerties, is also the author of the Hudson River Valley Special Resource Study Act, which would authorize the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a study on whether the Hudson River Valley should become a unit of the National Park system. Gillibrand is the Senate sponsor of that bill. In order for the Hudson River Valley to become part of the National Park System, a congressionally-authorized NPS study must be conducted. Hinchey's legislation would authorize such a study from Fort Edward in Washington County down through Westchester County. If the NPS's study finds that the Hudson River Valley would be a good fit as part of the National Park System then subsequent legislation would be needed to make that designation.

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